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AREA MAGNET SCHOOLS WON'T BE ALLOWED TO CHARGE TUITION FOR OUT OF DISTRICT STUDENTS

Legislation halts New Haven's plan to bill Hamden & other towns

The state House of Representatives unanimously approved legislation today sponsored by Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey (D-Hamden), Rep. Mike D'Agostino (D-Hamden) and Rep. Robyn Porter (D-Hamden/New Haven) that would prevent municipalities with magnet schools from charging tuition to neighboring towns for their out of district students.

The bill ([HB5553](#)) was prompted by the city of New Haven, where administrators indicated they may start charging tuition beginning with the 2016-17 school year, after years of only collecting a state per pupil reimbursement. If implemented, Hamden could eventually receive tuition bills of up to \$2,250 for each student attending New Haven's inter-district magnet schools, for a potential total annual liability of exceeding \$1.2 million. Hamden currently has about 570 students enrolled in New Haven magnets.

"Ensuring equal educational opportunity is an ongoing challenge, and adding tuition to a public magnet school education would set us back," said Speaker Sharkey. "Rep. D'Agostino did a great job navigating this complex issue, and as a result, Hamden taxpayers will be spared a significant extra cost, and Hamden students will continue to be able to attend an area magnet school if they wish."

New Haven has 17 magnets serving 22 area towns, with about 2,875 out of district students enrolled. Going forward, magnet school tuition would only be allowed with special permission from the state department of education commissioner, and only then when the host municipality gives neighboring towns at least 9- months' notice.

"After 13 years on the Hamden Board of Education, I understand where both Hamden and New Haven are coming from on this issue," said Rep. D'Agostino, who led the floor debate in the House. "But if a host district is going to charge tuition when it has not previously done so, there needs to be some oversight and notice. I expect we will all continue the discussion on this issue next year as well."

“Hundreds of Hamden students are currently enrolled in New Haven magnet schools and this bill allows them the opportunity to continue their academic studies without putting a financial burden on Hamden taxpayers,” Rep. Porter said. “I am pleased that the bill has passed the House and hope it will have a favorable review in the Senate.”

The legislation does not impact towns that are already charging tuition. Bridgeport and New London are the only other host municipalities currently doing so. Magnet schools operated by Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) or those under the court-ordered Sheff v. O’Neill settlement are also not affected.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.